

DISCUSSION

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Speaker's roles and responsibilities in academic discourse

The article provokes further comments on the quality of academic conference presentations. Naturally, our reception of any speaker's presentation is clearly influenced by our expectations. In this sense Prof. Niżegorodcew's article inspires to think of our own assumptions concerning the delivery of conference papers. It helped me to become aware of my own priorities as a college lecturer as well as conference presenter. I had always believed that the aim of lecture and conference papers alike is to inform (making the content accessible) and initiate a discussion (giving food for thought). Clear structure, visual aids (including multimedia) and maintaining contact with the audience, as stated in the article, contribute to the effectiveness of the presentation, which is further confirmed by feedback, including a variety of questions from both experts in the topic and less knowledgeable, but equally attentive, members of the audience. I had assumed this to be a widely acknowledged approach irrespective of an academic discipline represented by the presenter.

Experience proved otherwise. A "monologic" approach seems to be quite a common practice, especially in foreign literature and culture conference sections. What's more, some speakers seem not to distinguish between reading their articles at high speed and giving oral presentations. The reasons of this situation are enumerated in the article and vary from personal preferences and target language traditions to different academic settings. Surprisingly, my own suggestions to some of the conference organisers in Poland, aiming to provide all future speakers with some guidelines as to the format of the presentations, was met with mixed reactions. This made me think not only of the diversity of approaches to academic discourse but also of an indifference to the issue. The article in question made me reflect again on the nature of academic discourse and the role of interlocutors' attitudes in communication.